



## National Guard Deployment Along Southwestern Border Should Be Extended, Analysts Say

By Joshua Rhett Miller

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As the scheduled deployment of the National Guard along the United States' Southwestern border comes to a close, the campaign has been a success and should be extended, analysts told FoxNews.com.

"I think it has been [effective]," said Lawrence Korb, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and a former assistant secretary of defense. "It provides extra numbers down there; I think it's a very smart move. If you take a look at threats to national security these days, obviously what is happening in Mexico is very critical to our long-term security."

President Obama sent 1,200 National Guard troops to Southwestern states last summer to bolster security and improve anti-immigration efforts along the 2,000-mile border, including 560 dispatched to Arizona. Since that time, Department of Homeland Security officials say those troops have assisted U.S. Customs and Border Protection authorities with the seizure of more than 14,000 pounds of drugs and the apprehension of more than 7,000 illegal aliens.

"Today, the Border Patrol is better staffed than at any time in its 86-year history," Homeland Security spokesman Matthew Chandler wrote in an email to FoxNews.com.

Chandler said funding has also been secured to pay for improved communication systems and equipment along the border, including two new unmanned aircraft systems, and 1,000 additional Border Patrol agents.

But unless the National Guard's stay is extended, those troops are scheduled to leave the border at the end of June, a fact that worries Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer, who asked Obama in an April 25 letter to extend the stay.

"I am concerned that when the current mission ends in June, the gains we have made will be immediately lost," Brewer wrote. "Arizona can ill afford that kind of loss in the effort to secure the border."

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano told Reuters in late March that the administration was weighing whether to keep the troops there to contain border activity.

"They have proven to be very, very useful at the border," Napolitano told Reuters. "They have helped in a number of drug seizures among other things. I don't think the administration has made a final decision about whether and at what strength to leave the Guard at the border."

Aside from assisting Border Patrol agents and augmenting technical duties, National Guard troops have been involved in some high-profile drug busts, including a January bust in which smugglers reportedly used a large catapult to smuggle marijuana into the United States.

Mark Krikorian, executive director at the Center for Immigration Studies, said the National Guard troops have served as a "multiplier" to Border Patrol agents, mainly playing a support role with tasks such as manning surveillance cameras to processing incoming intelligence.

"Even in that capacity, there's an enormous amount of things they can do," Krikorian told FoxNews.com. "Both National Guard and active duty soldiers can be a real help to Border Patrol."

As such, Krikorian said the deployment should not end in less than two months.

"The idea of using troops on the border in support and training capacities needs to be made a permanent, standard part of



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controlling the border," he said. "The problem is it's episodic, it comes and goes depending on the political whims of the administration."

Krikorian also called for the deployment to be made nationally, not just along the Southwestern border. On the other hand, ending the deployment altogether makes no sense to Krikorian, given the successes of the National Guard.

"Then why end it? It's sort of an obvious question," he said. "Why would we wrap it up in June? That doesn't make any sense."

Ted Galen Carpenter, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at Cato Institute, is less certain of the National Guard's success, however.

"Theoretically, [the deployment] would allow Border Patrol agents to be more efficient in their basic functions," Carpenter said. "Logically, if you put more personnel on the border, you're going to inhibit illegal crossings more than a thin row of personnel. On the other hand, you have a lot of factors at work here and it's hard to account for variables."

Carpenter said the continually sagging U.S. economy typically leads to a slower flow of illegal aliens across the border. He also questioned whether the troops' presence led to greater apprehension rates of so-called "freelance immigrants," or individuals not associated with human trafficking or smuggling operations.

"Has this really improved border security? If so, by how much?" Carpenter continued. "We need a full-scale assessment before we talk about expanding it."

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